

The Captain's Corner

Now that we've moved into our new building, we've begun to focus on our production processes. On January 8th, we implemented a new production process designed around the building layout with the goal of maximizing efficiencies. Since then, we've allowed the process to run and I asked each of you to look for areas that are working and areas that you feel need to be changed. Next week we will take a close look at three weeks of production data and identify where we want to start making improvements. My intent is to establish a "system of continuous improvement."

Every production process in the world is constrained by bottlenecks. A production system will only be as productive as its bottleneck. For example, if one of our branches can only complete 20 evaluations per day, then our entire production system will be limited to printing and issuing only 20 credentials per day. Our job is to continually look for bottlenecks and find ways to turn these bottlenecks into non-bottlenecks. Finding the bottleneck will help us in two ways. First, it will tell us where we need to focus our limited resources toward improving the entire production process. Second, it will tell us when we need to stop making an improvement. We should work on a bottleneck only long enough to turn it into a non-bottleneck. When you reach this point, the bottleneck will move to another part of the process and the improvement process starts over again. The result is continuous improvement.

How can each of you help identify bottlenecks? Look for areas where inventory of applications is starting to build up. Good chances are that you've found the bottleneck. We can also use data from MMLD. Keeping accurate records of the production states in MMLD will help us identify bottlenecks. Specifically, we will be looking at three pieces of data for each production state: 1) inventory, 2) throughput, 3) cycle time in that state. So please help us improve by keeping accurate data in MMLD, look for where applications are starting to pile up, and identify ways to turn bottlenecks into non-bottlenecks.

Let the hunt for our bottleneck begin!

David C. Stalfort
Captain, U. S. Coast Guard
Commanding Officer

NMC Employee Awards

On January 14, the following staff members were recognized for their efforts during the NMC's Relocation Process:

Cash Award

Jeffrey Brandt, NMC-3

Time Off Award

Bobby Anderson, NMC-3
Pamela Brill, NMC-1
Andrew Ferguson, NMC-5
Deborah Holland-Thomas, NMC-0
Keith Janssen, NMC-3
Karen Quigley, NMC-4
Dennis Vickers, NMC-2
Guner Yarbrough, NMC-3

Certificates of Appreciation

ITC Matthew Altieri
IT3 John T. Bunting
Thomas Carpenter (Contractor)
Nicole Davidson (Contractor)
James Landis (Contractor)
IT1 Michael R. Ownby
Henry Seestedt (Contractor)
IT2 Aaron M. Short
ITC Shawn Wichelns

Years of Service Awards

The following NMC staff were recognized for their years of service to the US Government:

Name	Years
Robert Furukawa, NMC-4	20
Deborah Holland-Thomas, NMC-0	15
Pamela Whalen, NMC-3	10
Barry Walker, NMC-1	5
Ike Eisentrout, NMC-4	5
Guner Yarbrough, NMC-3	5

Coast Guard Commendation Medal

SK2 George Carich, NMC-42 received the Coast Guard Commendation Medal for his work in clearing a four-year backlog of Freedom of Information (FOIA) requests.

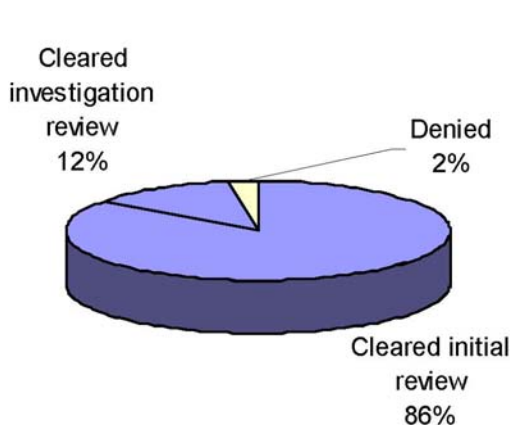
Security and Medical Evaluation Results

One of the key functions shifted to the National Maritime Center is the evaluation of credential applications. Evaluations are conducted in three areas to ensure that the mariner is qualified including, professional experience and knowledge, medical competency, and security background checks. In most instances, the evaluations are approved and credentials are issued. In a few instances mariners denied a credential due to either security or medical issues.

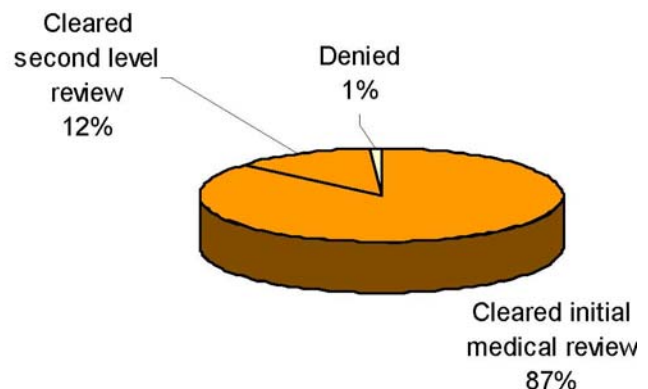
Among all the mariners submitting an application, approximately 98% “clear” their security background check. Of those denied, most are due to convictions involving drug use, driving-under-the-influence convictions, or severe crimes. In all cases, mariners are provided with the details of why the issuance of their credential was denied and specific instructions on how to request reconsideration or appeal the Coast Guard’s decision to deny their credential.

Analysis of the medical evaluation data shows that 99% of mariners do not have disqualifying medical conditions. However, many mariners do have significant medical conditions that require amplifying information for use in conducting further medical evaluations. In all cases, the mariner can apply for a waiver in an effort to continue to operate. As long as the safe operation of the vessel is not compromised, the Coast Guard usually grants the waiver. Of those denied a credential for medical reasons, most are due to severe medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or due to certain medications that affect the safe operation of a vessel. Mariners denied for medical issues are also offered the option to renew for continuity in order to retain their professional qualifications until such time as the medical issue may be resolved

**Mariner Licensing and Documentation
Security Evaluation Results -
98% of all security evaluations approved**



**Mariner Licensing and Documentation
Medical Evaluation Results -
99% of all medical evaluations approved**





Mariner Help Desk Hotline Statistics

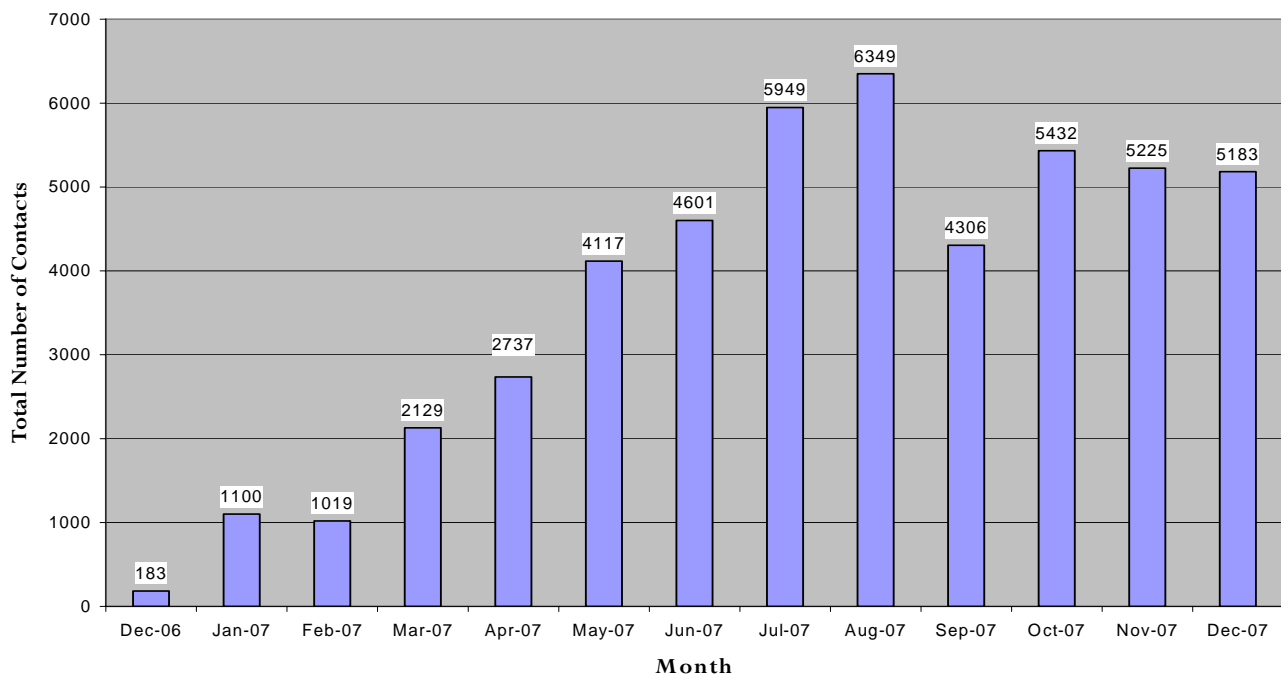
The Mariner Information Help Desk resource improves the MMLD process by answering customer inquiries via phone and email. Call center staff can provide information on application status, answer merchant mariner credential questions, explain fee payment procedures for the pay.gov website, or help callers navigate the Homeport site, which gives mariners the ability to check their own application status. The system streamlines customer communication by providing consistent, quality responses through a single point of contact. Since its inception in December 2006, the call center's five employees have responded to 48,831 customer contacts.

The Help Desk staff regularly receives appreciation notes and verbal praise for providing exceptional customer service. For example, an applicant had flown from Haiti to New Orleans for the day, to complete the ID verification and fingerprint process. The REC was closed that day, as the office was relocating from Metairie to Mandeville, LA. The applicant called the Help Desk, and the Help Desk agent worked to find a solution that allowed the mariner to meet with the REC staff, finish the application step and return to Haiti that night as scheduled.

In the first weeks of the Help Desk, some mariners weren't prepared for direct interaction. One applicant who called for assistance was probably expecting to hear a recorded message. When a real person answered and asked how she could help him, he didn't know what to do. He said he wasn't ready to talk to an actual person and quickly hung up.

The following graphs illustrate the volume and variety of information the Help Desk staff handle. The first graph shows the growing number of phone and email contacts by month since the Help Desk's inception. The second graph describes the different types of information requested by the callers.

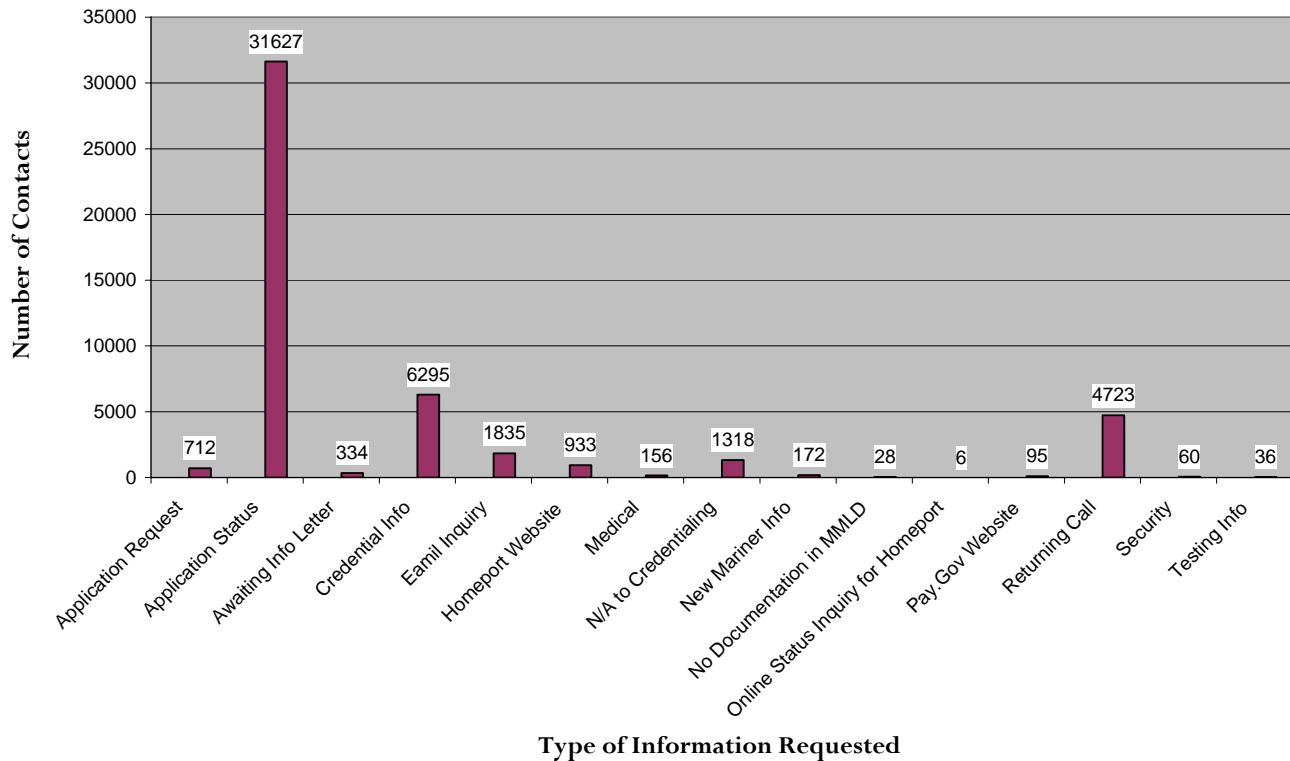
Help Desk Calls DEC 2006 - DEC 2007





Help Desk Statistics (Continued)

Help Desk Contacts DEC 06 - DEC 07



Position Updates

Program Administrator,
GS 15, NMC-0, Closing Date: February 5th

See USA Jobs <http://www.usajobs.gov/>
Search: Homeland Security, US Coast Guard

NMC staffing 73% of full strength

Future Event

Date: January 28 – 30
REC Team Academy Workgroup Meeting
Location: NMC West Virginia





Behind The Scenes: RECs Baltimore & Juneau

REC Baltimore

Located in the heart of the Mid-Atlantic region, Baltimore is a busy maritime center. There are deep-draft ships traveling through from Philadelphia, Norfolk, and other ports. Charter operations are a major industry, with fresh water sport fishing in the Chesapeake Bay and off-shore fishing from Ocean City, MD to Virginia Beach, VA. Fleets of commercial fishing vessels as well as dinner cruise ships are common in many ports.

The REC office is located in the 1902 Customs House that survived the Baltimore fire of 1904. The building is on the National Register of Historic Places, and its impressive Call Room has ceiling panels depicting the evolution of sailing and navigation, with paintings of more than 125 different vessels. This is a major tourist area, near Baltimore's Inner Harbor and Harbor Place, the National Aquarium, and the Baltimore Maritime Museum. The 1935 USCGC Taney, the USCGC Lightship Chesapeake, the USS Sub Torsk and the 1854 Naval Warship USS Constellation are all docked in the harbor area.

Most common licenses: The REC works with every type of license regularly, from deep water upper level to the 6-packs, plus lower level masters, and lower level restricted licenses [OUPV] for bass boat operations. MMD has even been issued for the mule-drawn boat Josiah White II on the Lehigh Canal in Easton, PA.

Most common vessels in port: Deep-draft ocean tankers and roll-on roll-offs (RORO's), commercial tugs & barges, dinner cruise vessels, small charters under 200 GT, and OUPV vessels are all common. There are military vessels of every type and size, and Baltimore fire & police boats patrol the harbor regularly.

Favorite local seafood dishes: Crabs steamed with Old Bay seasoning and served with a pitcher of beer in the summer. The Chesapeake Bay favors oysters and stripe bass; Ocean City, MD is the marlin capitol of the world.

Maryland is hot in the summer and can get very cold in the winter. If you can live and adjust to the weather changes in Maryland, you can live anywhere in the country.

REC Juneau

The city of Juneau is landlocked; the only way in is by Sate Ferry along the Alaska Marine Highway System, or via Alaska Airlines. The livelihood of communities in Southeast Alaska depends on the commerce and trade provided by the Inside Passage, a coastal route for ocean-going vessels that tracks along a series of passages between the mainland and small islands. The economy is seasonal, based largely on cruise ship traffic and summer tourism. Sport fishing and whale watching charters are also common.

Juneau is located in a temperate rain forest. Winter has short days, with rain and snow; summer makes up for it, with daily temperatures in the 70's and views all around of glaciers and wildlife.

Most common licenses: First Class Pilotage, and lower-level MMDs.

Most common vessels in port: Cruise ships, chartered fishing vessels, tugs with tows, and Alaska State ferries.

Favorite local seafood dishes: King crab, halibut and salmon.

Other things to know about Alaska: We don't live in igloos. AK stands for Alaska, not Arkansas. Alaska is part of the United States.